

# **El Paso VA Psychology Internship Program**

## **El Paso Veterans Affairs Healthcare System**

**MATCH Number: 240011**  
**Applications Due: November 23, 2021**



**2022-2023**  
**Internship Training Year**

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**Director of Training**

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**El Paso, TX 79930**  
**(915) 564-6100**

<http://www.elpaso.va.gov/>

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**MATCH Number: 240011**  
**Applications Due: November 23, 2021**

### ACCREDITATION STATUS

The El Paso VA Psychology Internship Program at the El Paso VA Healthcare System (EPVAHCS) is a funded VA Internship site with (3) positions. This internship is Fully Accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of the American Psychological Association.

Questions related to the program's accredited status should be directed to the Commission on Accreditation. Contact information is provided below.

Office of Program Consultation and  
Accreditation American Psychological  
Association  
750 1<sup>st</sup> Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002  
Phone: (202) 336-5979/E-mail:  
[apaaccred@apa.org](mailto:apaaccred@apa.org) Web:  
[www.apa.org/ed/accreditation](http://www.apa.org/ed/accreditation)



*Hiking on the Franklin Mountains, a mountain range that bisects the city of El Paso*

### STIPEND AND BENEFITS

The El Paso VA Psychology Internship Program is a one-year, full-time program that starts at the end of July. The current annual salary is \$26,297. Interns are eligible for 13 days of paid annual leave (you earn 4 hours every two-week pay period), 13 days of paid sick leave (you earn 4 hours every two-week pay period), paid time off for 11 Federal Holidays, and authorized absence for attendance at professional and scientific meetings (must be approved in advance by the Training Director).

Interns who complete the program successfully will be certified for 2080 hours of supervised clinical activity. Three interns will be selected for the 2022-2023 training year. Only 52-week full-time internships are available.

## **APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCEDURES**

### **Eligibility Requirements**

Consistent with VA policy, internship funding can be provided only to students who are U.S. citizens and are enrolled in APA-accredited doctoral programs in clinical or counseling psychology. In addition, we require that a prospective intern's university advisor or director of training verify readiness for internship on the Application for Psychology Internships (AAPI Online). Interns are subject to fingerprinting and background checks. Selection decisions are contingent on passing these screens.

***The minimum requirements for entry into our training program are as follows:***

1. Applicants must be U.S. citizens.
2. At the time of application, applicants must be enrolled in an APA-accredited clinical or counseling psychology doctoral program.
3. Applicants must have completed a minimum of 450 hours of supervised practicum experience (intervention and assessment) by the time the application is submitted.
4. Applicants must have passed all comprehensive examinations required by their graduate program by the application deadline.
5. It is strongly preferred that applicants complete their dissertation proposal prior to the application deadline.

### **Application Process**

We rely on the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers' (APPIC) portal for all application materials. EPVAHCS does not ask for any other information besides what is requested by the APPIC Application for Psychology Internships (AAPI Online). The El Paso VA Psychology Internship Program is committed to providing access for all people with disabilities and will provide accommodations if we are notified before the interviews. Reasonable accommodation requests for the interview process are readily entertained and expedited by the training faculty.

EPVAHCS values diversity and believes that a broad variety of perspectives and experiences contribute to a more inclusive and productive work environment. EPVAHCS is committed to promoting ongoing education, skill-building, and participation in events that demonstrate support for cultural diversity. We strongly encourage applications to our internship program from diverse applicants.

Please contact **Victoria Sank, Psy.D. Director of Training**, for questions or further information at **(915) 493-3345** or by email at [Victoria.Sank@va.gov](mailto:Victoria.Sank@va.gov).

**MATCH Program Code: 240011**



## Selection Procedures

Application materials are initially reviewed for completion, eligibility, quality of submitted materials, clinical and assessment experience, letters of recommendation, and goodness of fit with our program training goals. Applicants selected from this initial review will be invited for interviews. Interviews will be conducted virtually to increase accessibility to our facility. Keeping in mind the health and safety of all, should the conditional status of the present pandemic permit interested applicants will be invited to attend an optional Open House to view the facility and meet the staff. Note that non-attendance to the Open House will not put an applicant at any disadvantage in the selection process.

## Candidate Interviews

All personal interviews are conducted individually and by invitation only. Candidates will be informed by e-mail within 2 weeks of the application deadline whether or not they have been invited for a personal interview. We will offer three interview dates in January. The interview date will include a group meeting with the Training Director, individual one-on-one interviews with at least two staff psychologists, and a Q & A session with the current interns. We adhere strictly to the selection process guidelines established by the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC).

## Match Process

We follow the match policies established by APPIC. Consistent with our program's philosophy of viewing the internship year as likely the last chance for more generalist clinical training before specialization at the postdoctoral level, we have one match number for all 3 positions. The only information that we may communicate to applicants prior to the February Match deadline is whether they are still under consideration for admission. Additional information regarding the match is available through the APPIC National Matching Program at <http://www.natmatch.com/psychint>.



*"Bienvenidos", Welcome, reads the El Paso Street landmark  
A shopping district near downtown El Paso*

## **TRAINING SETTING**

EPVAHCS is a Complexity Level 2 facility that provides outpatient behavioral and medical healthcare to Veterans El Paso, Texas, Southern New Mexico and the surrounding cities. The El Paso VA includes four Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) located in Las Cruces, NM and El Paso, TX. It also includes a brand new outpatient behavioral health facility that we call the South Central Wellness Center. The majority of psychology intern training takes place at the South Central Wellness Center.

The city of El Paso is known as the “Sun City” and is located at the westernmost point of the state of Texas. It shares a border with Ciudad Juarez in Mexico, which is accessible by bridges that links the two cities. El Paso enjoys 300 days of sunshine a year and boasts a low cost of living. Within the city limits is the Franklin Mountains State Park with great options for recreation including taking a ride on the Wyler Aerial Tramway. Also within driving distance is the Hueco Tanks State Historic Site, the White Sands National Monument, Carlsbad Caverns, and Lincoln National Forest.



*Downtown El Paso, TX*

## **TRAINING MODEL AND PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY**

The El Paso VA Psychology Internship Program is committed to close supervision and competency-based training in a collegial setting. Our philosophy is that all practicing psychologists should have a strong foundation in general clinical psychology and the ability to apply empirical data to clinical procedures and assessment. We adhere to a Practitioner-Scholar model of psychology.

The program follows a traditional one-to-one apprenticeship model in which the intern works closely with her or his supervisor. Primary areas of skills are in clinical assessment and intervention, consultation, scholarly inquiry, and awareness of and sensitivity to professional, ethical, legal, and diversity issues. We believe that training in clinical and counseling psychology at the doctoral level should generally be broadly based, but are happy to support interns interested in the development of burgeoning expertise in health psychology, trauma, and couples psychotherapy.

### **Training Schedule and Rotations**

Our training program is focused on generalist training to produce well-rounded interns adaptable to address a wide range of diagnosis in a variety of settings. As a result, the bulk of intern training occurs within our Outpatient Behavioral Health Services clinic, otherwise referred to as General Mental Health. This service sees a wide variety of presenting problems with veterans from all service eras. Common presenting concerns treated include depression, anxiety, insomnia, trauma (military and non-military related), and adjustment/transition issues. Our outpatient service functions within BHIP teams, which stands for Behavioral Health Interdisciplinary Program. Each team is comprised of therapists (psychologists and social work), prescribing providers (psychiatrists or nurse practitioners), and nursing staff (RN or LVN). Interns join their major supervisor's BHIP team and participate in weekly team huddles and case consultations.



*Electric standing desks in offices*

Over the course of the training year, interns will complete two six-month major rotations within outpatient behavioral health; with a switch in supervisors after 6 months to be exposed to different perspectives and models of supervision. Interns will also participate in two six-month minor rotations that are six months in duration. Minor rotation options include: Suicide Prevention & Crisis Intervention, Clinical Neuropsychological Assessment, Differential Diagnosis/Psychological Assessment, Primary Care Mental Health Integration (PCMHI), and Psychology Administration. Rotation options vary in a given semester due to supervisor availability.

Additionally, interns are required to learn at least one Evidence-Based Psychotherapy (EBP) during the training year and will rank-order their EBP preferences at the start of internship. EBP options typically include: Prolonged Exposure, Cognitive Processing Therapy, CBT for Insomnia, CBT for Chronic Pain, Motivational Interviewing, Interpersonal Psychotherapy for Depression.



Interns will have the opportunity to discuss and develop their individual learning goals within each placement. **It is expected that each intern will spend a minimum of 10 hours face-to-face time providing direct patient care per week.**

## ***PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES***

The overarching mission of the El Paso VA Psychology Internship Program is to train psychology students who will attain general entry level practice competencies and can function effectively as professional psychologists in a broad range of inter-professional settings. The primary goal of our program is to train interns to provide a full range of psychological services for a widely diverse patient population and to attain competency for entry-level, independent practice.

## ***PROGRAM STRUCTURE***

In each of the major and minor rotations, interns will have routine supervision by a licensed psychologist. Additional clinical consultation, as appropriate, will also be available from the disciplines of psychiatry, social work, and physicians from other departments. The major rotations will comprise approximately 24 hours per week and minor rotations approximately 10 hours per week, leaving 6 hours divided between group supervision, didactics, and an extended intern lunch. Clinical supervision will be comprised of two individual hours provided by the major rotation supervisor, one individual hour provided by the minor rotation supervisor and 60 minutes of group supervision provided by the director of training or other psychology supervisors. Supervision methods will include live observation, record review, and video/audio-recording of sessions.

Over the course of the training year, each intern will work with three to four primary supervisors who are each responsible for the training experiences on their specific rotations. Supervisors assist in selecting patients and making referrals. The degree of responsibility given the intern and the amount of structure provided depends on his, her, or their level of prior experience and grasp of the rotation.

Interns will receive two formal evaluations from their rotation supervisors at the midpoint and end of each rotation for a total of four formal evaluations by the end of the training year. Ongoing informal evaluation and feedback will be provided throughout the rotations.



*Spring poppy blooms on the Franklin Mountains*



## **REQUIREMENTS FOR COMPLETION**

At the start of internship, interns will be assessed to determine baseline areas of strengths and weaknesses to facilitate the development of a training program that best meets the specific training needs of each intern. In keeping with our generalist philosophy, a training plan will be developed in collaboration with each intern that will address areas of weakness or gaps in experience. While this training plan services as an initial guide for training, training plans may be updated depending on the needs and interest of the intern over the course of the training year.

***It is expected that upon completion of the program all interns will demonstrate competence in the following domains:***

1. Professionalism
2. Interpersonal Effectiveness
3. Research/Application of Science
4. Cultural Competence
5. Professional Ethics
6. Assessment & Patient Feedback
7. Intervention & Treatment Planning
8. Consultation
9. Supervision

At the beginning of the training year, interns will receive a description of the competency elements. At the completion of each training rotation, the intern is rated on all competency elements that apply to that rotation. In addition to these formal competency ratings, a narrative summary of the intern's performance over the evaluation period is provided with information about the intern's progress, strengths, and areas for growth.

All VA psychology internships are exactly 52-week experiences. To successfully complete the program, each intern needs the combination of supervised professional experience, any educational leave (authorized absence), accrued sick and annual (vacation) leave to total 2080 hours. In the event of extended sickness, time off for pregnancy and child care or other exigencies, the intern may have to be placed on leave without pay (LWOP) status, thereby delaying his or her finishing the internship with the cohort class and necessitating the continuation of training into the subsequent training year.

## Summary of Requirements for Completion

- Minimum of 200 hours of clinical supervision
- Minimum of 500 hours of direct patient care (10 hours per week)
- Four formal case presentations (Two assessment cases, Two psychotherapy cases)
- One didactic presentation on her or his approach to supervision
- Six psychological assessment reports (minimum of 2 must be integrated to include at least one cognitive assessment and one objective personality assessment)
- Achieve competency in at least one Evidence-Based Psychotherapy (must successfully reach competency and completion of the selected EBP protocol with a minimum of two patients)
- Attend at least 90% of all didactic trainings
- Achieve High Intermediate ratings on 100% of competency elements on final intern evaluations.
- Complete evaluations on didactic trainings and supervision requirements.

## FACILITY AND TRAINING RESOURCES

Interns are provided with an individual office and secure networked computers necessary for patient care and administrative responsibilities. They have access to the VA online databases such as PsychInfo and PubMed as well as VA Intranet and Internet resources for clinical work. Interns will also have access to a wide range of psychological assessments.



South Central Wellness Center Lobby where all interns have a designated office

## ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The VA El Paso Healthcare System's policy on Authorized Leave is consistent with the national standard. You are welcome to discuss this with the Director of Training.

**Privacy policy:** We collect no personal information from you when you visit our web site.

**Self-Disclosure:** We do not require interns to disclose personal information to their clinical supervisors except in cases where personal issues may be adversely affecting an intern's performance and such information is necessary to address these difficulties.

**Due Process:** All trainees are afforded the right to due process in matters of problematic behavior and grievances. Due process procedures and policies are reviewed during orientation and are described below.

**Drug Free Workplace:** VA is a drug free workplace. See what that means for Trainees at: [VA Drug-Free Workplace Program Guide for Veterans Health Administration Health Professions Trainees](#)

**TQCVL:** Please review these additional program and VA requirements for qualification and credentialing. [Trainee Qualifications and Credentials Verification Letter \(TQCVL\) - Office of Academic Affiliations \(va.gov\)](#)

## **DUE PROCESS & REMEDIATION POLICY**

This policy provides doctoral interns and training faculty a definition of problematic performance, a listing of sanctions and an explicit discussion of due process.

**Definition of Problematic Performance:** Problematic performance is said to be present when supervisors perceive that an intern's competence, behavior, professional values, professional relationships, or other characteristics significantly disrupt the quality of his or her clinical services; his or her relationship with peers, supervisors, or other staff; or his or her ability to comply with appropriate standards of professional behavior.

Behaviors reach a problematic level when they include one or more of the following characteristics:

- \* The intern does not acknowledge, understand, or address the problem
- \* The problem is not merely a deficit in skills, which could be rectified by further instruction and training
- \* The intern's behavior does not improve as a function of feedback, remediation, effort, and/or time
- \* The professional services provided by the intern are negatively affected
- \* The problem affects more than one area of professional functioning
- \* The problem requires a disproportionate amount of attention from training supervisors

Some examples of problematic behaviors include:

- \* Engaging in dual role relationships
- \* Violating patient confidentiality
- \* Failure to respect appropriate boundaries
- \* Failure to meet minimum threshold criteria on competency evaluations within specified timeframes
- \* Failure to identify and report patients' high risk behaviors
- \* Failure to complete written work in accordance with supervisor and/or program guidelines
- \* Treating patients, peers, and/or supervisors in a disrespectful or unprofessional manner

- \* Plagiarizing the work of others or giving one's work to others to complete
- \* Repeated tardiness
- \* Unauthorized absences

**NOTE:** this list is not exhaustive. Problematic behaviors also include behaviors discouraged or prohibited by APA's Ethical Guidelines and VA policies and procedures. It is a matter of professional judgment as to when such behaviors are serious enough to constitute "problematic performance."

**Procedures for Responding to Problematic Performance:** When it is identified that an intern's skills, professionalism, or personal functioning are problematic, supervisors are expected to notify the intern immediately of these concerns. Supervisors should present these concerns to the intern using the Intern Evaluation Form, even if the problematic performance occurs outside of a formal evaluation period. Supervisors are also expected to immediately notify the Director of Training (DoT) of the problematic intern performance. The DoT, with input from other relevant supervisory staff, then initiates the following procedures:

1. The negative evaluation(s) will be reviewed by the DoT and other supervisor(s) involved and a determination made as to what action needs to be taken to address the problems identified.
2. After reviewing all available information, the DoT and involved supervisor(s) may adopt one or more of the following steps, or take other appropriate action:
  - a. The DoT may elect to take no further action.
  - b. The DoT may direct the supervisor(s) to provide additional constructive feedback and supervisory methods for addressing the identified problem areas. This process may also assist supervisor(s) in addressing support needed for a documented condition protected under ADA that does not interfere with the trainee becoming a psychologist. If such efforts are not successful, the issue will be revisited by the DoT and referral to Training Committee may be initiated.
  - c. The intern's graduate program Director of Training may also be consulted on the matter, depending on the seriousness of the issue(s).
  - d. Remedial recommendations based on the Intern Evaluation Form elements may be made, or referral to the Training Committee will be made and a probationary Performance Improvement Plan may be put into place.
3. Where the DoT determines that *remedial* action is required, the identified problematic performance of behavior must be systematically addressed. Possible remedial steps include (but are not limited to) the following:
  - a. Increased supervision, either with the same or other supervisors.
  - b. Change in the format, emphasis, and/or focus of supervision.
  - c. Change in rotation or other training experiences.
  - d. Additional modeling of desired behaviors by a supervisor, e.g.s., demonstrating a skill in a session, assessment, group, etc.
  - e. Recommendations of a leave of absence. HR will be informed to assist the intern in procedures.



4. Alternatively, depending upon the seriousness of the problematic performance, the DoT will involve the Training Committee and may place the intern on *probation* with a formal Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) which specifies that the committee, through the supervisors and DoT, will actively and systematically monitor for a specific length of time, the degree to which the trainee addresses, changes, and/or otherwise improves the problem performance or behaviors. If it is determined that a formal Performance Improvement Plan must be implemented, then the DoT will initiate involvement of Human Resources. The Performance Improvement Plan is a written statement to the trainee that includes the following items:

- a. A description of the problematic performance behavior.
- b. Specific behavioral recommendations for rectifying the problems. E.g., adhering to documentation timeframes, providing session recordings to supervisor, enacting a particular skill such as making clear suicide risk assessments, etc.
- c. Weekly review of progress between intern and intern supervisor; Bi-weekly review of progress by supervisor and DoT; Monthly review of progress by Training Committee. During weekly reviews, intern supervisor provides data and feedback to intern about status of progress. Review meetings with the intern are documented by the supervisor and documentation is submitted to the DoT on a weekly basis.
- d. Specific timeframe by which the behavioral changes and adherence to recommendations must be met to be removed from probation.
- e. Competency domains in which the intern's performance is satisfactory. Areas of satisfactory performance must be maintained while the intern works to correct the identified problematic performance behavior(s).
- f. Procedures to assess at each review period whether the problem has been appropriately rectified.

The intern's graduate program Director of Training will be advised that the intern has been placed on probation and a copy of the PIP will be sent to the graduate program Director of Training for any additional input he or she might have. In addition, the EPVAHCS Chief of MH Service, EPVAHCS Chief of Education, the VA Office of Academic Affiliations, and VA Regional Counsel will be alerted that a formal PIP has been issued.

5. Following the delivery of a formal PIP, the DoT will meet with the trainee to review the required remedial steps. The trainee may elect to accept the conditions or may grieve the Training Committee's decision following the intern grievance policy. In either case, DoT will inform the intern's graduation school Director of Clinical Training to indicate the nature of the problematic performance and the steps taken by the Training Committee. Once the Training Committee has issued an acknowledgement notice of the PIP, the intern's status will be reviewed using the timelines listed on the PIP.

**Failure to Correct Problematic Performance:** When the defined remediation recommendations do not rectify the problematic performance within the defined time frame, or when the trainee seems unable or unwilling to alter his or her behavior, the Training Committee may need to take further formal action. If an intern on probation has not improved sufficiently to rectify the problems under the conditions stipulated by the PIP, the Training Committee will conduct a formal review and then inform the intern in writing that the conditions for removing the intern from probation have not been met. The Training Committee may then elect to take any of the following steps, or other appropriate action:

1. Extend the Performance Improvement Plan for a specified period of time.
2. Inform the intern that the Training Committee is recommending that he or she be terminated from the internship program. The EPVAHCS Chief of MH Service, EPVAHCS Chief of Staff for Education, the VA Office of Academic Affiliations, and VA Regional Counsel will be informed of the Training Committee recommendation that the intern be terminated immediately. HR will be consulted to ensure proper procedure within VA policy for terminating an intern. The intern's graduate program Director of Clinical Training will be informed that the intern will not successfully complete the internship program. The Training Committee may specify to the graduate program those settings in which the former intern can and cannot function adequately. In case of termination, the intern is expected to complete all pending documentation on patients as well as any pending administrative tasks before out-processing.
3. When the Training Committee determines that the intern is not suited for a career in professional psychology, the committee may recommend a career shift for the intern and withhold endorsement for professional practice should the trainee later seek licensing in any jurisdiction.
4. Except when the Training Committee determines that the intern is not suited for a career in professional psychology, the intern does get credit for all training hours completed.

**Appeal Process:** An intern may appeal the decision of the Training Committee by submitting a detailed response to the recommendations of the Training Committee to the internship Training Director. A review panel, comprising 3 VA psychology faculty members, will be appointed by the Director of Training with the restriction that no one involved in the original action shall be on the panel. This panel will convene within 2 weeks of receipt of the intern's written response document. Legal representation from VA Regional Counsel shall be available to the panel concerning due process issues and the EPVAHCS Chief of MH Service, EPVAHCS Chief of Education, the VA Office of Academic Affiliations will also be informed and available for consultation. The DoT shall present the position of the Training Committee and the intern, together with any counsel he or she may choose, shall present the appeal. The Training Committee shall abide by the panel's judgment if it

recommends a change to the intern's PIP or continuation of training (in the event that the Training Committee has recommended that intern be removed from the program). Final decisions will be presented in writing to the intern by the DoT or by a member of the panel if the DoT is the person of concern in the intern's appeal.

All of the above steps will be appropriately documented and implemented in ways that are consistent with due process, including opportunities for trainees to initiate grievance proceedings to challenge Training Committee decisions.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

Due process ensures that decisions about interns are not arbitrary or personally biased. All interns are given guidance for expressing concerns about any aspect of the internship (see below) and staff have clear steps for approaching interns about problems they may be having in the internship (see Due Process Policy). Intern supervisors are expected to be receptive to intern complaints. We encourage communication about concerns early and often with the intern, supervisor(s), and academic programs in dialogue.

- I. **Informal Mediation**: The discussion of concerns begins in supervision, between intern and supervisor, and may expand to include the Director of Training as part of the consultative process. We view this as part of a mentoring process professional development, and making use of supervision to improve professional practice. This is not included in the intern's file.
  - a. **Intern brings concern to their supervisor** whenever identified and as part of the expected process for addressing professional complaints or concerns.
    - i. Supervisor and intern may agree to recommended changes to the learning environment or behaviors to resolve the concern.
  - b. **Intern brings concern to the Director of Training** if the matter has not found satisfactory resolution with the primary supervisor on a rotation, or if the intern feels in any way unsafe to directly address a matter with the rotation supervisor, s/he may present a concern to the Director of Training (DoT).
- II. **Formal Grievances**: If resolution of a concern is not reached by informal mediation and/or if the matter to be addressed is more significant than informal mediation is designed to resolve, the DoT will determine if formal procedures are required (see Due Process Policy).
  - a. **Written Responses**—Intern will submit written grievance to DoT. Intern grievances may include challenging a performance rating, disagree with a remediation plan or Performance Improvement Plan, establish a complaint against clinical faculty or other staff, or challenging a program policy or procedure.

- i. Formal grievances by interns will begin with notification to the DoT in writing. If the grievance is against the DoT, the intern can file the grievance with the Chief of Behavioral Health Service. The written grievance will include the following:
    - 1. The grievance and the date the incident(s) occurred
    - 2. Suggestion of ways to resolve the problem
    - 3. Information regarding any previous meetings to attempt to resolve the problem
  - ii. A response to the intern's grievance will be made within 5 business days by the Director of Training or Chief of Behavioral Health Service. The response will include written recommendations for resolving the issue(s).
- b. Review Panel—If the intern wishes to appeal written recommendations the matter will go to a final Review Committee comprised of the internship training committee and Chief of Behavioral Health Service.
  - i. Interns may present their grievance directly to the Review Panel. The intern may invite a staff member of his/her choice to provide advocacy and emotional support.
  - ii. The body to hear the formal grievance will be assembled as soon as possible and in all cases within three weeks from the presentation of the formal grievance. If the grievance is against the Director of Training or another individual normally assigned to this body, that individual is not involved in the body's deliberation and may only attend to provide testimony, as indicated.
  - iii. The Review Panel may involve the Director of Clinical Training from the intern's academic program.
  - iv. Any formal grievance and its resolution will be documented and copies forwarded to the Director of Clinical Training from the intern's academic program.
  - v. Recommendations by the Review Committee will constitute a final decision by the internship training program to address and resolve the intern's concern(s).



*San Jacinto Plaza in downtown El Paso, TX*



## **TRAINING STAFF**

### **BLUM, Carol S.**

Present VA Position: Staff Psychologist, GMH

Area of Specialization: Clinical Psychology

Degree: Ph.D., University of Montana, 1991

E-mail address: [Carol.Blum@va.gov](mailto:Carol.Blum@va.gov)

Licensure: Montana, Hawaii, New Mexico

Theoretical Orientation: Integrative, Client-Centered, Interpersonal, Cognitive-Behavioral

Clinical/Research Interests: Attachment orientation, mindfulness practices and their effects on psychological well-being, Trauma/PTSD

Current Role in Training Program: Training Committee Member and Facilitator of Supervision of Supervision

Brief Bio: Dr. Blum is a staff psychologist with the General Mental Health team via Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT) services. Dr. Blum completed her doctoral internship at Primary Children's Medical Center in Salt Lake City. She worked for several years at a community mental health center in western Montana, specializing in therapy with children, adolescents and families before starting a private practice. In her private practice she did extensive work with domestic violence, sexual abuse of children, sexual assault and other forms of trauma, worked with depression, anxiety, attachment disorder and marital discord. She also did both forensic and custody evaluations and testified as an expert witness. Her private practice in rural Montana and on the Big Island of Hawaii included a wide variety of psychological services offered to clientele across the life span. She also provided clinical supervision to graduate students in practicum as well as graduate psychologists seeking licensure. She began working for the El Paso VA in the summer of 2017. Dr. Blum engages in psychotherapy with a client-centered eclectic approach, bringing cognitive-behavioral, EMDR, mindfulness, interpersonal, and/or attachment orientations that are individually tailored to client needs.

### **CANDELARIO, Emilia A.**

Present VA Position: Associate Chief of Staff, Behavioral Health Services

Area of Specialization: Clinical Psychology- Trauma; Substance Use Disorders

Degree: Ph.D., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2009

E-mail address: [Emilia.Candelario@va.gov](mailto:Emilia.Candelario@va.gov)

Licensure: California

Board Certification: ABPP- Clinical

Theoretical Orientation: Interpersonal; Cognitive-Behavioral

Clinical/Research Interests: Trauma/PTSD; Multicultural Competence in Counseling; Training & Competency in Clinical Supervision

EBPs Supervised: (second semester only)

- Prolonged Exposure (PE) Therapy
- Motivational Interviewing (MI)
- Motivational Enhancement Therapy (MET)

Intern Training Rotation: Psychology Administration (second semester only)

**Current Role in Training Program:** Training Committee Member and Minor Rotation Supervisor

**Brief Bio:** Dr. Candelario is the Chief of the Mental Health Services department. She developed and headed the Psychology Training Program at El Paso VA HCS as the Director of Training since its start from 2016-2020, until she assumed the Chief of Mental Health Services role in September 2020. She specializes in the treatment of trauma and substance use disorders. Dr. Candelario served as a VA National Consultant and Trainer for MI/MET from 2014-2019. Prior to her current position with the El Paso VA Healthcare System, she served as a primary supervisor for postdoctoral fellows, doctoral interns, and practicum students at the VA North Texas Medical Center. She also held a faculty appointment at UT Southwestern Medical Center as an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and was actively involved in the training of medical students and psychiatry residents.

### **DENNIS, Michael**

**Present VA Position:** Neuropsychology Program Manager, Medical Specialty Services

**Area of Specialization:** Clinical Neuropsychology

**Degree:** Psy.D.

**E-mail address:** [Michael.Dennis1@va.gov](mailto:Michael.Dennis1@va.gov)

**Licensure:** New York

**Clinical/Research Interests:** Civil Forensic Neuropsychology; Rehabilitation Neuropsychology; Clinical Neuropsychology Evaluations

**Intern Training Rotations:** Minor Rotation in Clinical Neuropsychology

**Current Role in Training Program:** Minor Rotation Supervisor

### **ERWIN, Kyle M.**

**Present VA Position:** Supervisory Psychologist PCMHI and NPAT

**Area of Specialization:** Counseling Psychology- Trauma; Substance Use Disorders

**Degree:** Ph.D., Texas Woman's University, 2015

**E-mail address:** [Kyle.Erwin@va.gov](mailto:Kyle.Erwin@va.gov)

**Licensure:** New Mexico

**Theoretical Orientation:** Experiential; Interpersonal; Cognitive-Behavioral **Clinical/Research**

**Interests:** Psychotherapy Expertise; LGBTQ Issues; Positive Psychology; Couples Psychotherapy

**EBPs Supervised (not available 2021-2022 training year):**

- Prolonged Exposure (PE) Therapy
- Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)
- Interpersonal Therapy for Depression (IPT-D)
- Motivational Interviewing (MI)
- Eye-Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR)

**Intern Training Rotation:** Not available for 2021-2022 training year

**Current Role in Training Program:** Training Committee Member

**Brief Bio:** Dr. Erwin is a supervisory psychologist at the El Paso VA. Prior to this role, he served as a Staff Psychologist in GMH and the acting Director of Training for the Psychology Internship Program. He is also currently serving on the Disruptive Behavior Committee (DBC). He specializes in the treatment of trauma, couple distress, depression, and LGBTQ Issues. Dr. Erwin is also a co-founder and fellow of the Diversity and Resiliency Institute of El Paso (DRIEP) and a national consultation for the Interpersonal Psychotherapy for Depression Program for the Veteran's Hospital Administration. Prior to his current position with the El Paso VA Healthcare System, he served as a supervisor for third year psychiatric residents for the University of New Mexico's psychiatric residency program. He has served as a primary supervisor for the internship program since 2017 and supervised doctoral interns and practicum students at the Lexington VAMC and Raymond G. Moody VA Hospital. Prior to joining the VA as a staff psychologist, he held a faculty appointment at Texas Woman's University (TWU) where he taught cultural competency for the department of Sociology and Social Work at TWU.

**GILBERT, Sara E.**

**Present VA Position:** Staff Psychologist, GMH and Telehealth Champion

**Area of Specialization:** Counseling Psychology, Primary Care Mental Health Integration

**Degree:** Ph.D., University of Texas at Austin, 2012

**E-mail address:** [Sara.Gilbert@va.gov](mailto:Sara.Gilbert@va.gov)

**Theoretical Orientation:** Cognitive-Behavioral

**Clinical/Research Interests:** Primary Care Mental Health Integration (PCMHI) and Health Psychology

**EBPs Supervised:**

- Prolonged Exposure (PE) Therapy
- Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I)

**Intern Training Rotation:** General Mental Health and Psychology Administration (second semester)

**Current Role in Training Program:** Training Committee Member and Primary Supervisor

**Brief Bio:** After completing internship at the Cincinnati VA Medical Center, Dr. Gilbert completed a formal APA-accredited residency at the West Los Angeles VA HCS. Prior to joining our team in El Paso, she worked as a staff psychologist in the Primary Care Behavioral Health Clinic at the Central Texas VAMC in Austin. In this role, she provided brief assessment and brief psychotherapy teaching CBT-based coping skills, relaxation, and sleep hygiene. She also provided brief trauma treatment and offered introduction to relaxation, meditation, and pain education classes. As a telehealth provider based in Austin, TX, Dr. Gilbert serves as our facilities Telehealth Champion. In her off time, Dr. Gilbert enjoys practicing yoga and playing with her kids.

**GONZALEZ, Andrea**

**Present VA Position:** Staff Psychologist and PTSD Specialist

**Area of Specialization:** Counseling Psychology

**Degree:** Ph.D., New Mexico State University, 2019

**E-mail address:** [Andrea.Gonzalez6@va.gov](mailto:Andrea.Gonzalez6@va.gov)

Licensure: New Mexico

Theoretical Orientation: Psychodynamic, Interpersonal, Radical Behavior

Clinical/Research Interests: Trauma/PTSD and Integrated Behavioral Health Care/Health Psychology

EBPs Supervised:

- Prolonged Exposure (PE)
- Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)
- Eye-Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy (EMDR)
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Depression (ACT-D)
- Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

Intern Training Rotations: General Mental Health

**Current Role in Training Program:** Primary Supervisor

Brief Bio: Dr. Gonzalez is a PTSD specialist and staff psychologist in the Behavioral Health Service. She specializes in trauma care across domains, including military, developmental, complex/poly-, and migration-related. Comorbid presentations are common within her trauma-focused caseload and expertise, including chronic pain, grief, and personality disorders. Dr. Gonzalez completed her doctoral internship at the El Paso VA HCS, gaining advanced training in Home-Based Primary Care (HBPC), and Trauma. In her free time, Dr. Gonzalez loves all things outdoors with her son, daughter, and significant other to include hiking, camping, concerts, and travel.

## **MENZIES, Mark**

Present VA Position: Supervisory Psychologist, GMH

Area of Specialization: Clinical Psychology

Degree: Psy.D., James Madison University, 2013

E-mail address: [Mark.Menzies@va.gov](mailto:Mark.Menzies@va.gov)

Licensure: New Mexico

Theoretical Orientation: Interpersonal; Cognitive-Behavioral

Clinical/Research Interests: Trauma recovery, personality development, anxiety and depression, integrative psychotherapy, provider self-care, spirituality and religious issues.

EBPs Supervised:(second semester)

- Cognitive-Processing Therapy (CPT)
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

Intern Training Rotation: Psychology Administration (second semester)

**Current Role in Training Program:** Training Committee Member and Minor Rotation Supervisor

Brief Bio: Dr. Menzies works as a supervisory clinical psychologist providing individual, group and couple's therapy for a range of conditions. He completed his internship with the Cincinnati VAMC, helping veterans with homeless, substance abuse and trauma issues. Prior to his work with veterans, Dr. Menzies worked with children, teens and families in the child welfare system. He has experience working with individuals across the lifespan, and is trained in dynamically informed and cognitive-behavioral approaches to therapy.



**NESBIT-VELTRI, Donna A.**

Present VA Position: Supervisory Psychologist, Recovery Services

Area of Specialization: Clinical Psychology

Degree: Ph.D., Fairleigh Dickinson University, 1990

E-mail address: [Donna.Nesbit-Veltri@va.gov](mailto:Donna.Nesbit-Veltri@va.gov)

Licensure: Arizona, New York (inactive)

Theoretical Orientation: Cognitive-Behavioral

Clinical/Research Interests: Police and criminal psychology, forensic psychology, threat assessment, workplace violence prevention

Intern Training Rotations: Psychology Administration (second semester only)

**Current Role in Training Program:** Training Committee Member and Minor Rotation Supervisor

Brief Bio: Dr. Nesbit-Veltri, Ph.D. is the Supervisory Psychologist for the Recovery Programs in the Behavioral Health Service. Prior to taking on her current position, she supervised psychologists providing a wide range of disability evaluations, including evaluations of veterans and active duty military for claimed conditions of PTSD, mental disorders, and military sexual trauma. She has extensive experience in the assessment of suicide risk and crisis intervention, as well as threat assessment, and worked in correctional settings for 20 years prior to employment with the VA healthcare system. She is an Adjunct Instructor for the Department of Psychology at the University of Texas-El Paso.

**OBERLE, Deanna M.**

Present VA Position: Suicide Prevention Psychologist

Area of Specialization: Clinical Psychology – Forensic Assessment

Degree: Psy.D., Florida School of Professional Psychology, 2015

E-mail address: [Deanna.Oberle@va.gov](mailto:Deanna.Oberle@va.gov)

Licensure: Florida

Theoretical Orientation: Interpersonal; Cognitive-Behavioral

Clinical/Research Interests: Forensic Psychology; Violence Risk Assessment; Severe Mental Illness

Intern Training Rotation: Suicide Prevention & Psychology Administration

**Current Role in Training Program:** Training Committee Member and Minor Rotation Supervisor

Brief Bio: Dr. Oberle is a staff psychologist on the suicide prevention team. In her current role, she serves to facilitate the implementation of suicide prevention strategies within the El Paso VA HCS and surrounding community. Prior to serving in this role, she served as a staff C&P psychologist for the Special Exams Unit at El Paso VA. She specializes in providing comprehensive mental health disability evaluations to veterans and service members referred by the Veterans Benefits Administration. Prior to her current position with the El Paso VA Healthcare System, she worked as a licensed psychologist at a private practice, where she provided psychological and forensic assessment services to a diverse client population including children, adolescents, and adults. In August 2016, Dr. Oberle completed a forensic post-doctoral residency at Northeast Florida State Hospital, where she served as a forensic evaluator and as the primary assessment minor rotation supervisor to pre-doctoral interns.

**SANK, Victoria E.**

Present VA Position: Staff Psychologist and Director of Training

Area of Specialization: Clinical Psychology

Degree: Psy.D., Florida Institute of Technology, 2015

E-mail address: [Victoria.Sank@va.gov](mailto:Victoria.Sank@va.gov)

Licensure: New Mexico

Theoretical Orientation: Cognitive-Behavioral; Behavioral

Clinical/Research Interests: Integrated Behavioral Health Care/Health Psychology and the impact of chronic medical illness on psychological well-being; Trauma/PTSD; Therapeutic Assessment; Ethical Decision Making

EBPs Supervised:

- Interpersonal Psychotherapy for Depression (IPT-D)
- Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)
- Prolonged Exposure (PE)

Intern Training Rotations: General Mental Health, Psychological Assessment, and Psychology Administration

**Current Role in Training Program:** Director of Training and Primary Supervisor

**Brief Bio:** Dr. Sank is a staff psychologist in GMH and Director of Training (DOT) for the psychology internship program. Dr. Sank completed her doctoral internship at the Oklahoma Health Consortium, gaining advanced training with the physical and psychological needs of individuals with diabetes and endocrine disorders. She has gained extensive training in integrated behavioral health care, providing clinical services to individuals across the lifespan in various health care settings (primary care, specialty medical clinics, and inpatient medical facilities). Dr. Sank engages in psychotherapy with a patient- centered/whole-person care approach emphasizing the promotion of self-management as a key goal in therapy. She has training in models of therapeutic assessment and has a passion for training interns in therapeutic means of providing assessment feedback. Additionally, Dr. Sank serves as the Evidence-Based Psychotherapy Coordinator for the El Paso VA and as the lead PTSD Specialist for our embedded team of trauma informed therapy providers. In he off time, Dr. Sank enjoys cooking, baking, and weekend trips to Cloudcroft, NM with her husband and daughter.

**Williams, Patrie C.**

Present VA Position: Staff Psychologist, Primary Care Mental Health Integration- Women's Health Clinic

Area of Specialization: Clinical Psychology

Degree: Ph.D., Jackson State University, 2017

E-mail address: [patrie.williams@va.gov](mailto:patrie.williams@va.gov)

Licensure: Texas and New Mexico

Theoretical Orientation: Cognitive-Behavioral; Behavioral

Clinical/Research Interests: Identifying and examining psychosocial factors that underlie psychological and physiological conditions affecting African American/Black people and their communities.

**Intern Training Rotations:** Primary Care Mental Health Integration (PCMHI)

**Current Role in Training Program:** Rotation Supervisor

**Brief Bio:** Dr. Williams is a licensed psychologist in Texas and New Mexico and works as a staff psychologist in PCMHI. She graduated from Spelman College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology, Master of Science degree in Professional Counseling from Carlow University, and earned her doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology from Jackson State University. Dr. Williams completed her APA-Accredited pre-doctoral internship at Florida State Hospital. During her academic studies, she studied abroad in Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic where she experienced and participated in the Holocaust remembrance tour. She also took advantage of opportunities to broaden her academic and practicum awareness by working with special needs adults in Ireland. At the El Paso VA, Dr. Williams participates in a full range of psychotherapeutic, diagnostic and training activities, performs assessments, level of care determinations, evidence-based individual and group psychotherapy as well as treatment planning and program development.



## ***INTERNSHIP ADMISSIONS, SUPPORT, AND INITIAL PLACEMENT DATA***

### **INTERNSHIP PROGRAM TABLES**

Date Program Tables are update: 09/07/2021

#### **Program Disclosures**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Does the program or institution require students, trainees, and/or staff (faculty) to comply with specific policies or practices related to the institution's affiliation or purpose? Such policies or practices may include, but are not limited to, admissions, hiring, retention policies, and/or requirements for completion that express mission and values. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes</b><br><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b> |
| If yes, provide website link (or content from brochure) where this specific information is presented<br><br><a href="#">Trainee-Eligibility.pdf (va.gov)</a>  |  |

## Internship Program Admissions

Briefly describe in narrative form important information to assist potential applicants in assessing their likely fit with your program. This description must be consistent with the program's policies on intern selection and practicum and academic preparation requirements:

Candidates for the El Paso VA Psychology Internship Program must be US citizens enrolled in a doctoral (PhD or PsyD) clinical or counseling psychology graduate program, which is accredited by the American Psychological Association or Canadian Psychological Association. Candidates must be approved by their graduate program's Director of Training as ready for internship, and it is strongly preferred that applicants complete their dissertation proposal prior to the application deadline. Interns are subject to fingerprinting and background checks. Selection decisions are contingent on passing these screens.

Applicants must have a minimum of 450 hours of supervised clinical experience (Assessment and Intervention combined). We seek applicants who have a sound clinical and scientific knowledge base from their academic program, strong basic skills in standard assessment and psychotherapy and the personal characteristics necessary to function well in our internship setting. Our selection criteria are based on "goodness-of-fit" with our training opportunities. We are a generalist program with heavy emphasis on psychotherapy and assessment. We have limited research and teaching opportunities. In psychotherapy, we tend to focus on evidence-based psychotherapy and building proficiency in implementing time-limited interventions grounded in the VA/DOD clinical practice guidelines. There are opportunities for more focused training in health psychology, and trauma psychology for example. We are interested in building an Intern class that comes from many different kinds of programs and theoretical orientations, from different geographical areas, of different ages, of different cultural backgrounds, and with different life experiences.

Does the program require that applicants have received a minimum number of hours of the following at time of application? If Yes, indicate how many: 450 combined assessment and intervention

Total Direct Contact Intervention Hours: N Y

Amount: to sum 450 in combination with assessment hours

Total Direct Contact Assessment Hours: N Y

Amount: to sum 450 in combination with intervention hours

Describe any other required minimum criteria used to screen applicants:

1. Applicants must be U.S. citizens.
2. At the time of application, applicants must be enrolled in an APA-accredited clinical or counseling psychology doctoral program.
3. Applicants must have completed a minimum of 450 hours of supervised practicum experience (intervention and assessment) by the time the application is submitted.
4. Applicants must have passed all comprehensive examinations required by their graduate program by the application deadline.
5. It is strongly preferred that applicants complete their dissertation proposal prior to the application deadline.



## Financial and Other Benefit Support for Upcoming Training Year

|   |  |    |
|---|--|----|
| Annual Stipend/Salary for Full-time Interns   | \$26,297   |    |
| Annual Stipend/Salary for Half-time Interns   | N/A  |    |
| Program provides access to medical insurance for intern?  | Yes  | No |
| If access to medical insurance is provided:   |  |    |
| Trainee contribution to cost required?  | Yes  | No |
| Coverage of family member(s) available?   | Yes  | No |
| Coverage of legally married partner available?  | Yes  | No |
| Coverage of domestic partner available?   | Yes  | No |
| Hours of Annual Paid Personal Time Off (PTO and/or Vacation)  | 104 hours (13 days equivalent; earned 4 hr/pay period) |    |
| Hours of Annual Paid Sick Leave   | 104 hours (13 days equivalent; earned 4 hr/pay period) |    |
| In the event of medical conditions and/or family needs that require extended leave, does the program allow reasonable unpaid leave to interns/residents in excess of personal time off and sick leave?  | Yes  | No |
| Other benefits (please describe):<br>Interns receive 11 paid federal holidays in addition to their leave mentioned above. Additionally, you may be granted additional authorized absence for attendance to professional and scientific meetings with prior approval of the Director of Training. The United States government covers interns for malpractice under the Federal Tort Claims Act. |  |    |

\*Note. Programs are not required by the Commission on Accreditation to provide all benefits listed in this table.

## Initial Post-Internship Positions (Aggregated Tally for the Preceding 3 Cohorts)

|   | 2017-2020 |     |
|---|-----------|-----|
| Total # of interns who were in the 3 cohorts                        | 4         |     |
| Total # of interns who remain in training in the internship program | 4         |     |
|   | PD        | EP  |
| Academic teaching   | 0         | 0   |
| Community mental health center                                      | 0         | 0   |
| Consortium  | 0         | 0   |
| University Counseling Center  | 0         | 0   |
| Hospital/Medical Center   | 1         | 0   |
| Veterans Affairs Health Care System                                 | 0         | 2   |
| Psychiatric facility  | 0         | 0   |
| Correctional facility   | 0         | 0   |
| Health maintenance organization                                     | 0         | 0   |
| School district/system  | 0         | 0   |
| Independent practice setting  | 0         | 1   |
| Other   | N/A       | N/A |

Note: "PD" = Post-doctoral residency position; "EP" = Employed Position. Each individual represented in this table should be counted only one time. For former trainees working in more than one setting, select the setting that represents their primary position.

Positions for the 2020-20221 cohort include: VA Post-Doctoral Residency; Post-Doctoral Residency at an Academic Medical Center; Employment at a VA HCS

## ***TRAINEES***

Graduate programs of our past and current trainees:

### 2021-2022

Adler University  
California School of Professional Psychology  
The Chicago School of Professional Psychology

### 2020-2021

New Mexico State University  
University of North Dakota

### 2019-2020

No Trainees

### 2018-2019

New Mexico State University  
Fielding Graduate University

### 2017-2018

Biola University  
Fielding Graduate University

## ***LOCAL INFORMATION***

[Destination El Paso | El Paso, Texas \(visitelpaso.com\)](https://www.visitelpaso.com)

[City of El Paso Texas](https://www.cityofelpaso.com)

[Home \(elpasotexas.gov\)](https://www.elpasotexas.gov)

[Downtown El Paso Districts](#)

## ***Additional Pictures of the Surrounding Area***



Plaza theater and downtown dining district



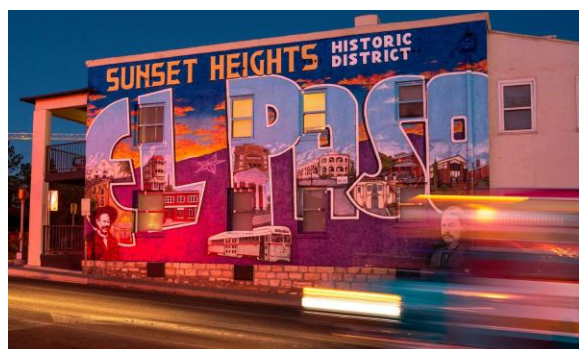
Downtown to Uptown Trolley



Ballet Folkloric Dancers



Cultural heritage of the Yesleta Mission Trail



Beautiful murals and public art around town



"Elephant Rock", hiking the Franklin Mountains



Sunsets over the El Paso/Juarez region



Centennial Museum & Chihuahuan Desert Gardens